Original works and contracts.

17. Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja.—Will the Government be pleased to state:—

1. the date on which the present Chief Engineer was appointed to that post;

2. (a) the names of the original works undertaken during his time whose estimate amounted to Rs. 1,000 or above;

(b) the names of those who submitted tenders for each of these works and the rate of each;

(c) the name of the person to whom each of the work was actually given and the reason for special preference, if any;

(d) the amount of estimate for each of the work;

(e) whether there was any alteration in the estimate; if so, what is the difference between the final bill and the estimate in each case;

(f) which of these works were condemned in part or in whole?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—

1. 20th Chingam 1100.

2. (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f). It is not possible to prepare the exhaustive lists called for on account of the enormous number of contracts entered into during the last three years. If any work or group of works is specified, the details regarding their names, tenders, etc., will be looked into and furnished.

18. Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja.—Will the Government be pleased to state:—

1. the name of the Public Works executed departmentally by the present Chief Engineer;

2. the amount of estimate for each of such works and the actual cost of the same;

3. the name of the officer who was in immediate charge of each of these works?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—1, 2, 3. A statement containing the information is appended.(*Vide Appendix I.*)

Estimate for the construction of the Cheerakuzhi Sree Rama Varma Bridge.

19. Mr. A. B. Salem.—(a) Will the Chief Engineer be pleased to state as to who (which officer of the department) prepared the estimate for the construction of Sree Rama Varma Bridge (Cheerakuzhi);

(b) what is the actual cost of construction;

(c) what is the amount of the estimate;

(d) who checked the estimate;

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(e) if there is a difference between the estimated cost and the actuals, will he be further pleased to state to what cause the difference is due ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—(a) The estimate was prepared by the Assistant Engineer, Eastern Division, under the personal instructions of the Chief Engineer.

(b) The cost of construction is about Rs. 93,000, including the rectifications now being done to the dry pitching to the river banks and the re-metalling of the approach roads.

(c) Rs. 1,19,500.

(d) The estimate was first checked by the Draftsman-Supervisor and then by the Chief Engineer.

(e) The difference is mainly due to the modifications made in the foundations of the piers during actual execution and the savings in the cost of the main girders.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—"The difference is mainly due to the modifications made in the foundations of the piers during actual execution and the savings in the cost of main girders". May I know the modifications ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—They are of a technical nature, but generally I can say that at first it was estimated for a deeper foundation. But the foundation was not so deep as it was anticipated. So there were some savings.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—May I know what the modifications were ? How many feet less was the foundation from the original plan ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—I cannot say that now. I must refer to the papers.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Will you kindly tell me the amount of money thus saved in that one item ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—Approximately it may be about Rs. 15,000.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—And in the case of girders ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—In the case of girders it was only a rough estimate, e. g., as so many tons. But in the actual work, it was found that the weight of girders used was less.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—May I know the amount of savings there ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—I cannot say definitely. Approximately it is somewhere about Rs. 6,000.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Even then Rs. 5,000 is not accounted for.

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—I gave only approximate figures. In a big estimate like Rs. 1,20,000, it is not pos-

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sible to remember the exact figures. I did not anticipate these details.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—My case is this. A plan is made, and an estimate is prepared, before the actual work is begun. Then, when the actual construction comes, at once deviation takes place. Now, in this particular case, the deviation takes place from the very foundation. Of course, I can understand a drop in the prices of articles, a difference in the prices estimated and the actual prices. But in the case of Engineering works having a foundation of so many feet, there must be some preliminary investigation conducted before the estimate is prepared. When such great variations come, all that I want is to safeguard the interest of the money that is spent on these estimates. Because, if these plans are not laid properly, we do not know what the estimate would be. This is no estimate at all. I can also prepare an estimate, and spend according to the actual requirements. That is the only point I am insisting upon.

President.—What is the reason for estimating originally a foundation at a greater depth, and for subsequently giving it up, and thus reducing the foundation ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—When the estimates are prepared, especially in foundation works, it is not possible for us to go and break the foundation and definitely locate the piers.

President.—In the preparation of the estimate, you do not go and excavate the foundation to see where you get a rocky basis, but the foundation is only estimated to the probable depth. I mean it is not done after experimentation.

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—We take rough borings only.

President.—As Mr. Salem is finding fault with the working of the Department, I ask you what the real process of preparing an estimate is. Are we not to have proper materials for knowing as to what particular depth these stones have to be laid ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—We have only an approximate idea.

President.— But how is that idea arrived at ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon. —We are taking preliminary borings.

President.—Even that is a technical expression. You must see the situation, and must have information as to what the depth should be for putting up the pier ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—In the case of this particular bridge, it was only possible to find out the average

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

depth. When we come to actual construction, we have to locate the piers. Then it may be that the rock level is much higher than our average.

President.—But when you take the depth of the foundation, do you not go from one end of the bridge to the other and see how the level is, where you have got a rocky portion, where you have got loose soil, etc.; do you not get all sorts of information about these from one end to the other by a systematic examination?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon—Not at every point.

President.—If you do it from one end to the other, are you not likely to come across places where the piers are to be located?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—It is not possible to do it for that purpose. We do not locate piers when we prepare the estimate.

President.—You don't locate the piers, when you prepare the estimate?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—We only specify how much ventway there should be between the piers. We do not exactly find out where the piers are to come in actual work.

President.—Why do you, Mr. Salem, suspect that these estimates are prepared in a haphazard manner?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—The question is only a question of depth. I do not even know how many piers there are in this particular bridge.

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—There are eight piers.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—There was the question of locating eight piers. Do you not make a plan before you actually prepare the estimate?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—Yes. In the plan you will have to put the number of piers and also the spans of the bridge. Then you know how many feet through the river that span has to be worked out. What I am saying is, before the plan is drawn up, they have to look into the nature of the soil, the number of spans, and piers necessary, and all those things. But is it because the Assistant Engineers draw up plans in a slip-shod fashion that such variations come?

Presideut.—Are you an expert in this, Mr. Salem?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I have studied this question, and have put a question on a particular matter.

President.—Then, what is the basis for your contention that the plans are drawn up in a slip-shod manner? Unfortunately, we have not much time at our disposal. Otherwise, we could discuss the matter and convince you that you have not

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

taken the correct view in the matter. With the estimates and plans before us, we will be able to satisfy you. They have prescribed rules; everything is laid down in the *Public Works Manual*, and they will not be allowed to do anything at their whim and fancy.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—You see from the answer given here that Rs. 15,000 was the difference on account of the foundation being not so deep as was estimated and Rs. 6,000 on account of the girders. What about the balance of Rs.5,000 ?

President.—That amount is only an approximate figure.

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—I have not got the correct figures here.

President.—It may be correct or it may be wrong.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—In any case, since modifications took place, you should have varied the original plan.

President—Do you now ask what is the actual cost of construction, and what is the amount of the estimate ?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—My question is very vital, because there was a deviation from the original plan.

President.—Then you should put the question "Will the Government be pleased to state to what cause the difference is due?"

Mr. A. B Salem—How else can I frame the question? I gave full notice to show that there is a difference.

President—You should have put it as "to what cause the difference is due, or what is the cause of the difference?"

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Under each of these variations, I expected that the Chief Engineer would have come ready with all the materials for any supplementary question as to what the actual cost is, what the difference is due to and all those things. He could have told us also what was the difficulty in preparing the estimate for locating the piers in the plan, and if they have made borings there, what kind of soil they have come accross with and all those things.

President.—I cannot allow this supplementary question. It is not to elucidate matters involved in the answer. You want a new fact to be ascertained.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—My object in putting this question is to bring to the notice of the Government the variations that take place in many estimates. It is a very undesirable practice. I want you to take note of the matter, and to look into it more carefully in future.

President.—In all these things deviations cannot be dispensed with, and the only thing we should see is whether the Assistant Engineer or the Overseer is shirking his work. That

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

is all that we have to do. Has any instance of that sort come to your notice?

Mr. A. B. Salem—When the difference comes to Rs. 20,000 or Rs. 30,000 in the estimated cost and actual cost.....

President.—We have taken up a costly work. Suppose the cost of the work comes to only Rs. 10,000, you cannot find such a large difference. That is the point. When the estimate has gone up to a high figure, you must expect a large difference.

Mr. A. B. Salem—I am glad that Government are gainers in this matter, and I purposely take up these things where they are gainers.

President.—Whether we are gaining or losing that is not the point. The point to be grasped here is whether the work is done in a slip-shod fashion.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Mr. Achyuta Menon, the Hon'ble Member for Mulakunnattukavu, is anxious to give us an answer on this point. I say let him become a minister, and he can answer.

Mr. C. Achyuta Menon.—With regard to the construction of the Alwaye bridge, the reply of the British Resident to the Cochin Darbar was that an estimate was not to be understood as representing the actual cost.

President.—Mr. Salem also knows that actual cost would be different from estimated cost.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I have urged my point, and you have understood my point.

President.—Are the Assistant Engineers not preparing their estimates properly?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—They are, Sir.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—There is a difference of Rs. 20,000 or Rs. 30,000 in the estimate.

President.—There must be some basis for your question. The purpose of all your questions would seem to be that executive officers of the P. W. D. are doing their work in a slip-shod fashion.

Mr. A. B. Salem—May I know, Sir, who the Chief Engineer was when this estimate was prepared?

President.—Mr. Krishnan Nayar was the Chief Engineer.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—He was reputed to be a very clever and careful Engineer. Since an estimate prepared by him varied, it caught my eyes. An estimate of a most economic Engineer like Mr. Krishnan Nayar has gone down by Rs. 20,000 or Rs. 30,000.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

President.—I suppose you are not contending that he is infallible.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I do not contend.

Construction of the waiting shed at the Ernakulam Ferry.

20. Mr. A. B. Salem.—Will the Chief Engineer be pleased to state:—

(a) how many tenders were received, and from whom, for the construction of the waiting shed at the Ernakulam Ferry Landing place ;

(b) the amount of the estimate ;

(c) the amount of the various tenders ;

(d) which tender was accepted;

(e) the reason for the acceptance, if any?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—(a) 6 tenders.

From Messrs. (1) K. I. Vavoo, (2) C. M. Francis, (3) M. Nanu Menon, (4) P. T. Xavier, (5) A. Kumara Kaimal and (6) V. E. Namia.

(b) Rs. 7,400.

(c) No. (1) at 3½ per cent less than the estimated rates, No. (2) at 2 per cent less, No. (3) at 2 per cent less, No. (4) at 4¾ per cent less, No. (5) at 5½ per cent less, and No. (6) at 7½ per cent less.

(d) No. (2) was accepted.

(e) No. (2) was best fitted to execute the work satisfactorily.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—In answer to sub-division (e) of this question, I find the words "best fitted" and "satisfactorily". What is the underlying idea in the words " best fitted " and "satisfactorily" ?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon.—The meaning of those words is quite plain.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—He is the best of the contractors you have taken for the work. That is why I am asking whether there is any special meaning for the words "best fitted" and " satisfactorily". The work is an ordinary shed which is built in front of us. It is only an ordinary one, stone placed upon stone. Since it is an ordinary work, why could this work be not entrusted to the lowest tenderer who undertakes to do it at 7½ per cent less? I can see no reason why it is given to the *best fitted* man and one who could *satisfactorily* do it.

President.—I cannot allow this, and I cannot encourage this.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—May I know what is the meaning of the words " best fitted" and " satisfactorily" ?

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